

## INTERNATIONAL CITY MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION

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### 13 GUIDEPOSTS ON ASSUMING A CITY MANAGER POSITION

What steps should the new city manager take during the first few days on the job-- during the first few weeks--during the first few months? What does the experience of selected city managers suggest?

The first few months on the job are critical for any person assuming a new administrative position. They are especially difficult for the city manager because of diverse responsibilities including relations with the city council, city employees, and the public. The purpose of this report is to suggest some guideposts for the city manager on taking a new job and to offer suggestions for planning his time as carefully as possible during the early, critical months on the job.

It is not the purpose of this report to set forth absolute rules and principles. Such an attempt would be fallacious because it would ignore the differences among communities and the need for approaching each problem in its own place and time. If anything this report emphasizes instead the diversity of problems faced by new managers and the need for working out an approach to each problem that takes into account the situation in that community. In addition, each manager's approach to a given problem will be conditioned to some degree by his own personality.

The International City Managers' Association asked the managers of eight cities to prepare letters or memoranda outlining in some detail their activities during the first three months on the job. This report is based almost entirely on these replies. Subsequent sections of this report describe the eight cities surveyed, summarize the four time phases for the new city manager, and discuss the 10 most important guideposts in taking over a new city manager position.

The cities represented by the eight reporting managers range in population from 25,167 in Gloucester, Mass., to 77,634 in Portland, Me. Four of the men are serving as the first city managers in the cities they represent: Riverside, Calif.; Evanston and Maywood, Ill.; and Gloucester, Mass. In the remaining four cities the council-manager plan became effective more than 30 years ago: Colorado Springs, Colo. (1921); Kenosha, Wis. (1922); Portland, Me. (1923); and Daytona Beach, Fla. (1922).

Riverside, Calif. (56,571) began operations under the manager plan in August, 1953, with Oren L. King as the first city manager. Prior to going to Riverside, Mr. King had had 10 years of manager experience in Montrose, Colo., and Pendleton and Eugene, Ore. It is a fast-growing city which had a 1940 population of 34,696 and is diversified economically with employment in retail trade dominant but manufacturing comprising a substantial part of aggregate employment.

Kenosha, Wis. (54,368), adopted the manager plan in 1922, and Richard H. Custer is the seventh city manager, taking office in October, 1952. Prior to the Kenosha appointment, Mr. Custer had almost seven years of manager experience in Ft. Fairfield, Me., and Windsor, Conn. Economically, Kenosha is classified as a manufacturing city, and employment in manufacturing is 75 per cent of the aggregate



employment in manufacturing, trade, and service. The city had a 1940 population of 48,765.

Colorado Springs, Colo. (45,472), adopted the manager plan in 1921. John M. Biery is the fifth city manager and took office in February, 1952. Mr. Biery had six and one-half years prior manager experience in Midland, Mich. Although the city is known nationally as a resort and vacation center, its principal economic base is retail trade which is greater than employment in wholesale trade, service, or manufacturing. The city had a 1940 population of 36,789.

Maywood, Ill. (27,473), appointed Newell N. Jenkins as first city manager in August, 1952. Mr. Jenkins, who resigned the position in May, 1954, had 16 months of prior manager experience in Slater, Mo. Maywood is a suburb of Chicago with a large commuting population. Manufacturing is important in the community's economy, however, and accounts for 60 per cent of aggregate employment in manufacturing, trade, and service. Maywood's population in 1940 was 26,648.

Portland, Me. (77,634), adopted the manager plan in 1923. Julian H. Orr is the fifth city manager and took office in January, 1954. Mr. Orr has previously served for three years as manager of Bangor, Me. Portland is a diversified city where employment in retail trade is dominant, but manufacturing comprises 32 per cent of aggregate employment. Portland's 1940 population was 73,643.

Gloucester, Mass. (25,167), appointed Dean C. Cushing as the first city manager in January, 1954. He had four and one-half years previous manager experience in Derry, N.H., and Wilmington, Mass. Gloucester is a diversified city where employment in manufacturing is dominant, comprising 44 per cent of aggregate employment. The 1940 population of Gloucester was 24,046.

Evanston, Ill. (73,641), adopted the manager plan in 1953, and Bert W. Johnson took office as first city manager in December, 1953. Mr. Johnson had five years prior manager experience in Lebanon, Mo., and Boulder, Colo. Evanston is a suburb of Chicago with a large commuting population and a diversified economic base. Employment in retail trade is dominant, but manufacturing comprises 21 per cent of aggregate employment. Evanston's 1940 population was 65,389.

Daytona Beach, Fla. (30,187), adopted the manager plan in 1922. The stormy political history of this city is reflected in the 20 city managers preceding LeRoy F. Harlow, the present manager who took office in April, 1952. Prior to his appointment in Daytona Beach, Mr. Harlow had almost six years of manager experience in Sweet Home, Ore., Albert Lea, Minn., Fargo, N. D., and Richfield, Minn. Daytona Beach is a resort and retirement town where employment in manufacturing is only 13 per cent of aggregate employment, and more than 10 per cent of the resident labor force is employed in restaurants, hotels, and places of amusement and recreation. The 1940 population was 22,584.

#### Four Time Phases for the Manager

The actions which the manager should consider and the matters to which he should give attention during the first few months on the job are discussed below under four different but closely related time phases: the period between appointment as manager and actually beginning work, the first few days on the job, the first few weeks, and the first few months,

These time periods are arbitrary. They are presented, however, to emphasize the need for the new city manager to plan carefully within the time available what he is going to do first, second, third, and so forth through to the point where he



has some idea of where he would like to be after several months on the job. The greatest hindrance to the new city manager will be finding the time to do the multitude of things he will want to do, be asked to do, and be expected to do. Not all of his objectives can or should be defined immediately, however, and he should caution himself that not all problems can be solved within a few months.

The steps to be taken quite naturally will vary from one city to another, but there are certain actions or plans which seem to be generally applicable based on the experience of the eight managers reporting. The manager therefore should try to establish some logical sequence of steps in order to avoid what may be a chaotic situation during his first few months on the job. An initial plan should be made even though it may be impossible to follow this plan rigidly. Having a plan, though continually changing, is of vital importance to the new city manager in conserving his time and avoiding dangerous mistakes based on lack of knowledge of the community and of a particular situation applicable to the management job.

Before Going on the Job. Four different steps were taken by all or most of the city managers reporting: (1) Subscribing to the local newspaper; (2) Securing copies of minutes of city council and board meetings and studying ordinances and resolutions adopted, postponed, and voted down; (3) Giving further study to the city charter or state enabling act and the current city budget; and (4) Answering conscientiously all mail that comes from anyone in the city.

City Manager Harlow faced an especially difficult situation prior to reporting for duty in Daytona Beach. Upon taking office he was the fifth city manager to serve the city in a period of 16 months, and was appointed by a three-to-two vote of the city council. Prior to reporting, Harlow got up a tentative action program to cover the first few weeks on the job and sent it to the mayor of Daytona Beach for his approval.

This program listed things to be done during the first week on the job, the second week, the third week, and later. For the first week, for example, he indicated such steps as meeting department heads, inspecting the city's physical plant, contacting service clubs, securing personal history statements from city employees, and sending a request to every city department and agency for a report on organization, activities, staff, and finances. In addition, he proposed that the city council adopt a resolution setting forth a dignified "Declaration of Purposes" for the city government which should be posted conspicuously in city buildings and distributed to the newspapers and radio stations.

Other specific actions were proposed for the second week, the third week, and later periods including a review of financial procedures, administrative reorganization, personnel, and public relations.

City Manager Biery who had 30 days before going on the new job subscribed to all newspapers in the town and wrote one or two articles for a newspaper saying that he had written the article at the request of the editor. Biery did not contact any citizens, city employees, or former managers.

Only one manager had an opportunity to talk briefly with his predecessor while he was still on the job and he writes: "I think this was worth while as we were able to agree on the handling of a couple of personnel problems where the decision had to be made at once but the results became effective after I arrived."

Where possible, the new manager should urge a sympathetic city council to decide controversial questions before the manager begins work. In Evanston, City Manager Johnson met with the chairman of the council committee on committees to



discuss reduction of council committees from eighteen to six. Prior to his reporting, the Evanston city council reduced the number of committees and took other actions including the doubling of the motor vehicle license fee.

The First Few Days. Most or all of the city managers indicated the following seven steps taken during the first few days on the job, but these managers made no attempt to indicate any priority either in time or importance.

1. The manager should get better acquainted with the mayor and the members of the city council.

2. The manager should meet with the city department heads to outline how he proposes to work with the city council and city employees and what his goals and objectives are for better city government.

City Manager Johnson, Evanston, described in some detail what he covered in his first department head meeting held within two hours after arrival on his new assignment; those invited included elected city and township officials as well as those reporting to independent boards. He stated in part "...I wanted them to think that this was a team effort and that I expected them to be members of a team that will crusade for the public interest. While expecting loyalty from them, I expected to earn their loyalty too by hard work, by sincerity of purpose, and by supporting them in their particular assignments.

"Because this is a new form of government, I told them that I would not expect that they will fully understand the relationships, but that I did want them to understand that I attempt to shoot 'straight from the shoulders' and that any gossip and rumors they might hear, a natural tendency under new conditions, should be jotted down and checked before allowed to spread among their city employees."

City Manager Custer on his first day in office held a meeting of all department heads at which he explained informally his philosophy of government and administration, told them of his background and pledged his support and asked their cooperation. "I did not seek their views or questions as I believed it more important at this stage to give them an opportunity to appraise me as a person rather than for me to try to measure them as department heads."

3. Several managers specifically indicated the importance of accepting all speaking invitations when the manager is first on the job. City Manager Biery, Colorado Springs, stated that, "These requests started the first day on the job and continued for several weeks. My attitude in these talks is that the people want to see the new city manager ... The big job for the manager in these talks is to establish confidence and become acquainted with as many people as possible."

City Manager King, Riverside, said, "During this period, I accepted all invitations to speak before clubs, organizations, PTA, etc. I know this is a questionable procedure, but I felt the people of Riverside in voting in this plan were interested in meeting their first city manager ... I felt it was worth the time and effort to make these little talks...."

City Manager Custer, Kenosha, commented, "During the first few months I was also in considerable demand as a speaker before various groups and, while frequently tempted to refuse because of the heavy work load, I accepted all invitations."

There are, of course, no absolutes in situations of this kind. City Manager Cushing, Gloucester, took a different view when he commented, "I suggest that few,



if any, speeches be made at this time since the town characters will be ready to ask questions either to embarrass the new manager or to get a point across which would be hard to recall after the manager, in all good faith, utters the fateful word that puts him in the position of handling all hot potatoes that will be thrown his way."

During these first few days on the job the manager has to be more careful than usual about making any public statements. City Manager Harlow stated: "Immediately after going to work I was called upon for a substantial number of meetings and, of course, asked for opinions about a number of things. I made it a practice to be completely noncommittal, because obviously I didn't know what the answers were to many of the questions raised."

4. All of the managers mentioned that inspection should be made of the entire city's physical plant including utilities, streets, parks, playgrounds, and public buildings.

5. The manager may find it necessary very shortly after arrival to ask the city council to get together for an informal meeting to outline definitely the jobs of the manager and the council and to set forth a time table for action on any immediate and urgent problems facing the city government.

6. The manager will want to get acquainted very quickly with newspaper publishers and executives of radio and television stations. He should get acquainted with reporters assigned to the city hall, explain his policy that no information will be withheld, and ask for their cooperation in keeping the public informed.

City Manager Custer, Kenosha, gave a radio talk the first day he was on the job. The talk was brief and general but stressed that the citizens could count on honesty and integrity in the administration and on receiving full information about the operations of their government.

Custer was invited to give the radio talk, but he commented that he would have asked for the time if he had not received the invitation.

7. Finally, the manager will want to put further time on the city charter, the city budget, audit report, and other essential records. City Manager Harlow reported that he found it helpful during this time to study the city payroll to become familiar with the names of city employees.

The activities of City Manager Orr during the first few days in office probably are typical. He spent a great deal of time getting acquainted with the city family and with the community. He says: "I spent a lot of time the first day talking to my secretary and my assistant. The afternoon of the first day I went around the city hall with my assistant, shaking hands with department heads and other personnel in their offices. These visits were very brief and informal. Beginning the next day conferences were scheduled with individual department heads at which time they told me about the operations of their departments. Some of these conferences involved field visits to such places as the hospital, public works garage, park departments, fire stations, police headquarters, and so on. I met with the planning board and told them that it would be my policy to sit in on all of their meetings."

City Manager Orr made a television appearance on a community program on the first day he was in office, and on the second day he visited the offices of the local paper to chat with the managing editor, meet the staff, and talk with the city hall reporter about problems of press relationships. During the first few



days in office he also attended the annual meeting of the chamber of commerce and joint service club meeting and met many callers who dropped in at the office to say "Hello" and "Welcome to Portland".

The First Few Weeks. During the first few days on the job the manager has had time to become acquainted with department heads, supervisors, city council, newspapermen, and a few of the community leaders. He has been able to get an overall view of the finances and the general administration of the city, and some of the more urgent deficiencies in administration and public services are probably already apparent. During the first three to four weeks on the job, he must take further steps to become better known with the people with whom he will work, give particular attention to his reporting to the city council, and begin a systematic review of all phases of city government finances. Six different points were mentioned by one or more of the managers, and these are discussed below.

1. The first thing the manager has to do is line up office facilities for his own work. This applies especially, of course, to those who come in as the first city managers in their communities. City Manager Jenkins had to diplomatically appropriate an office used two afternoons a week by the police magistrate because all other office space was used full-time by other officials.

2. City Manager King spent considerable time during the first few weeks interviewing candidates for the positions of secretary and administrative assistant. There was some delay in appointing these aides and he made this comment, "As I look back, I would not have delayed the employment of these administrative assistants because by this time things were beginning to pile up to where the help of an administrative assistant and an efficient secretary was imperative to carry the volume of work expected."

3. Where it was not already being done, managers initiated regular reports to the city council. City Manager King, as the first city manager, limited his recommendations to matters of minor importance during the first few weeks, stating always that further study would have to be made on major questions of program and policy for the city government. In Evanston, a weekly one-page newsletter was started for the city council and city employees.

4. All managers, either directly or indirectly, indicated their keen awareness of the importance of public relations especially in dealing with complaints and service requests. City Manager King during this time gave his personal attention to any kind of city council or citizen request. If it was a problem that could be dealt with better outside the city hall he would drive out and talk with the citizen personally.

5. All managers of course were aware of the importance of preparing or reviewing and amending the city budget. Four managers, Jenkins, Custer, Orr, and Johnson, had to give almost immediate attention to the city budget during the first few weeks on the job. City Manager Orr went over the budget document which had been tentatively drafted by his predecessor and persuaded the city council to change the estimates for surplus and revenues. He then persuaded the finance committee of the city council to meet with the school board, which was independently elected but fiscally dependent on the city, to explain the budget cuts and to promote better relationships. The budget was adopted by the city council seven weeks after the manager's arrival.

6. When the city council asks for help, the city manager may be able to propose changes in the procedures for conducting city council meetings. City Managers Orr and Harlow suggested changes to provide earlier closing dates for



council agenda so that individual councilmen could be better prepared for the regular meetings of the council. The agenda issued by the city clerk, according to City Manager Orr, "...was expanded to include the text of measures proposed. Previously these measures had been distributed among members, each member standing to read a few of them and move passage. Other members did not have a copy and depended upon oral presentation. Now each member has a copy, and the clerk reads all measures...." In Evanston, an agenda was used for the first time.

In addition to the actions outlined above, City Manager Cushing took these steps during the first few weeks on the job: checking every purchase made by the city during the two-week period prior to his taking office and during the first month or so on the job; getting a complete roster of all city employees and reviewing the job classification and pay plans; getting a recapitulation of all existing administrative ordinances; and having an inventory made of all city-owned real and personal property.

City Manager Harlow took these steps: meeting and shaking hands with every city employee; setting up a monthly budget allotment system; and securing a statement from every city department and agency on organization, staff, cost of operation, and description of program and activities.

The First Few Months. In addition to work with the city council, city employees, and the public, managers generally found that they were able to give much more time and study to three major phases of management: planning, finance, and personnel.

By the end of the third month in office, City Manager King had worked out a procedure with the city council for setting up a long-range capital improvement program covering seven years. The council established citizen study committees with city government representation to consider each of seven different programs. A member of the city council served as chairman of each of these groups. The work done by these committees in Riverside is described in Public Management, June, 1954, p. 131.

Under finance administration, managers gave study to tax collection, accounting, and purchasing procedures. City Manager Orr, for example, classified the city's revenue accounts according to the standard classification of the National Committee on Governmental Accounting.

In checking into personnel administration, managers realized that job classification and pay plans were of paramount importance. City Managers Johnson and Harlow got position classification and pay plan studies under way.

#### Ten Guideposts for the Manager

The replies from the eight city managers reveal 10 major areas of immediate and particular concern during the first few months on the job. Some attention must be given to all of these if the city manager is to approach his new job successfully. These 10 guideposts are discussed below, and it is notable that they are concerned with the manager's relations with the city council, city employees, and the public and with the management phases of the job rather than with operating decisions concerning street signs, traffic lights, fire trucks, garbage collection, and other direct city government activities.

1. General Appraisal. The city manager should do everything he can to soak up the environment of the community to which he has moved. The manager can do this casually by reading the newspapers and talking with various people. He can



systematize it somewhat more, however, by reading a history of the city, if one has been published, and checking the census statistics applicable to his community, especially data on manufacturing, retail trade, housing, and population. The data on economic classification of cities in each edition of the Municipal Year Book are helpful as a starting point in checking census data. As time permits, he should learn the resources of the community, including churches, schools, and cultural and recreational facilities available to citizens. The more of this information he can absorb in a short time the better prepared he will be to recognize deficiencies in the program of the city government and to make policy recommendations to the city council.

2. Relations with the City Council. This is the most important part of the manager's job if he and the council are to work effectively. Accurate information is not available, but it is likely that managers spend as much as 30 to 40 per cent of their time in meetings with the council, carrying out instructions of the council, and preparing reports for the council. Much has been written on the subject of the manager's relations with the city council including an entire 27-page chapter in the ICMA training manual, "The Technique of Municipal Administration".

One city manager aptly summarized this subject in stating, "Gently and kindly, instruct the council in their responsibility of policy making and resist all tendencies to take over administration. When policy somewhat adverse to your recommendations has been adopted by the council, don't sulk or refuse to administer it. Later, by education and selling, this policy may be changed."

3. Relations with City Employees. When a new city manager takes over his job there is bound to be some feeling of insecurity on the part of most of the employees in the organization. This is particularly true of department heads who are inclined to be suspicious or at least skeptical of the new boss.

To ease this situation the manager should lose no time in meeting his department heads and as many other supervisors and rank-and-file employees as possible. The manager may wish to call a general staff meeting to get acquainted with his department heads, but he also should visit each department head in the department head's office. The manager should ask for the loyalty and support of his department heads and assure them that no changes will be made as long as their work is satisfactory. Department heads should be assured also that their advice and consultation will be solicited carefully before any changes are made in organization or procedures.

It is important also for the manager, especially if he is the first manager, to inform all city employees on the principles of council-manager government, state briefly in broad terms what his policies will be, and request their cooperation and loyalty in getting the city's work done.

The effectiveness of the administration depends to a large extent on how well employees understand and how thoroughly they believe in the plans they are carrying out. The manager must be able to motivate and inspire his associates. If he develops the habit of dropping in on department heads every few days or so to inquire how they are getting along with specific assignments, it will indicate the manager's continuing interest in their work.

City Manager Jenkins worked for several months to overcome a disorganized administration that was apparent when he assumed the job as Maywood's first manager. The village board had adopted the manager plan by ordinance without prior publicity to the community as a whole, and only very limited information on the plan had been disseminated within the administrative organization. All department heads attended



the meetings of the village board, and the board members were accustomed to dealing directly with department heads. The situation was eventually corrected as the manager gradually, by patience, persuasion, and example, sold both department heads and the village board on the idea that it was easier for both groups if the board dealt directly with the manager.

4. Public Relations. All eight managers agree that the first and most important thing the manager should do in public relations is to identify his various publics and try to become acquainted with the real leaders of various groups in the community. This can be done both by meeting informally with as many people as possible, by giving talks to service clubs and other citizen groups, and by accepting all speaking invitations. The importance of these various publics was stated emphatically by City Manager Harlow as follows:

"What a new manager does--and when--depends, it seems to me, on the political atmosphere in which he has to operate. He has to do his best to accurately sense and gauge the public attitude toward the change, and particularly estimate the composite feeling of the council. Unfortunately, councils themselves don't always know what they want or where they are headed, so the manager is hard put to choose a right course. He has to 'feel his way' along, suggesting, then biding his time, or proposing alternates which are of substantially equal merit but whose selection will indicate council attitude.

"...to help get a sense of the mind of the general public,...I got up a list from various sources...of the community leaders--and I don't mean just business men, but business leaders, labor leaders, community leaders, ministers, PTA leaders, garden-clubbers, etc.... During the first few months in office I made it a point to drop in and chat with a good many of these people."

A second step that can be taken is systematic followup of complaints and service requests. Some kind of record should be kept by the city manager's secretary or administrative assistant under the date set for action so that the matter can be reviewed to see if the matter has been disposed of. The third step to be taken during this time is to become acquainted with newspaper representatives.

These steps plus perhaps an occasional radio or television appearance are much more important during the first few months than worrying about annual reports, tax leaflets, and other publicity devices.

Methods used by the manager in establishing good public relations, especially in a new council-manager city, are important not only for the success of the form of government but also for the manager. City Manager Cushing says the important thing is "...how he handles the people concerned. ...If a new manager can prove to every one he contacts during his first three months in office that he will stand only for a fair, impartial, honest, honorable, and common sense, business-like job which will be done under his direction, he has done the best thing I know to insure success."

5. Relations with Boards and Commissions. The city manager should become acquainted with the personality and ability of the officers and members of boards and commissions that are in any way formally constituted as a part of the city government. When the council-manager plan is first installed the board members will be rather uncertain as to how the new administration will affect their work, and the manager should take every opportunity to assure them that their work will be carried on very much as before.

Members of boards and commissions who are unsympathetic or indifferent to



the manager plan, can be a great obstacle both to the manager and to the city council. Along this line one city manager stated that "The biggest mistake I have made in my years as a manager has been in the belief that the majority of persons on boards and commissions should be retained because of their experience in spite of their attitude toward the manager plan." As vacancies occur on boards and commissions the city council has the opportunity to appoint persons sympathetic to the spirit as well as the form of the council-manager plan.

6. Administrative Research and Planning. This broad term covers all that the manager should do in studying the problems of organization, coordination, control, records, procedures, office management, and the like. Deficiencies in administrative research and planning will be apparent in some cities almost as soon as the manager gets on the job, and he should prepare a tentative list of jobs to be done to improve management practices. As he gathers more information and sounds out officials and employees he can then develop specific recommendations for improvement.

City Manager Harlow, for example, gathered organization data for every city department and agency, secured personal history statements from every city employee, set up a budget allotment system, and studied other phases of the administration of city departments. He was able shortly after arrival to get city commission approval for a comprehensive reorganization which reduced the number of departments from 16 to 8.

7. Finance. Budgeting, general accounting, cost accounting, tax assessment, financial reporting, the condition of the city's debt, and other phases of finance administration need to be checked. The city budget always is the first job and has to be reviewed and verified for the balance of the fiscal year so that allotments can be set up as needed and plans can be drawn for the budget for the following fiscal year.

Sometimes the manager must take strong measures to overcome a weak cash position or appropriations that are in danger of being overexpended before the end of the fiscal year. City Manager Custer found on going to Kenosha that the position of the general fund was unknown and the departmental budget requests were largely unsupported. These two factors were complicated by pending salary and wage increases, on a retroactive basis, which made a substantial tax increase inevitable. He had to devote a great deal of time to drafting a balanced budget for council consideration.

8. Planning. The development of physical, social, and economic planning for the community is important everywhere. As the manager inspects the city's physical plant during the first few days in office, he can use his powers of observation to spot the major deficiencies in physical planning. In studying census data on the community he may be able to find areas for social and economic planning.

Planning is particularly urgent when the city is growing rapidly in population. City Manager King found this to be so in Riverside, a city that had increased from 35,000 to 57,000 in 13 years. In addition to setting up seven study committees to draw up a broad-scale program for public improvements, the city manager and the city council held meetings with the school board and the board of county supervisors to correlate their long-range planning with the work being done by other governments in the area.

9. Personnel. The elements of a comprehensive personnel program include recruitment, training, employee relations, job classification, salary administration, retirement, service ratings, and the building of a loyal and competent force.



Perhaps the most important of these for immediate purposes is the position classification plan which is needed to provide a comprehensive inventory of the jobs in the city service as an aid to developing a salary plan, training programs, recruitment of employees, and other personnel work.

City Manager Johnson, shortly after beginning work, made arrangements for a complete survey by an outside organization to develop classification and pay plans for the city service and began an in-service training course in the Technique of Municipal Administration for supervisory personnel. This course is part of the training series sponsored by the Institute for Training in Municipal Administration of the International City Managers' Association.

10. Laws and Ordinances. The state constitution and statutes, the city charter, and city ordinances provide the legal framework within which the city council and the city manager operate. The city manager will need to become as familiar as possible with the legal framework of the city government and should consult with the city attorney as often as needed to gain this understanding. The city manager has an advantage during this review because he is a layman and an outsider. As such he may be able to spot the more serious deficiencies, especially in city ordinances, and to encourage the city attorney and city council to pass additional ordinances that are needed.

A review of city ordinances may convince the manager that a recodification is one of the first jobs to be undertaken. This was the case in Evanston, where City Manager Johnson recommended and received approval for the recodification.

#### Special Problems

The above portions of this report have dealt with the early parts of the city manager's job from the standpoint of time and administrative guideposts. These suggested management practices have been based on the actual experience of eight city managers and on what are generally considered to be sound principles of organization, management, and human relations. All of these practices, however, can be upset or postponed to a large degree if the new manager is faced with a critical problem which must be acted upon immediately. This was precisely the situation that faced the managers who went to Colorado Springs and Kenosha.

When City Manager Biery began work at Colorado Springs the city manager position had been vacant for more than six months, and a problem of refuse collection and disposal had been a major topic at city council meetings for that entire period. When Biery took over a decision on the problem had to be made within two weeks. This problem had been deferred by the city council until the city manager was hired. As Biery said, "The garbage question couldn't wait, I had to take advice from department heads without finding out all the answers, and a decision was made, council action taken, and a real fight started. It was rough for a while. This particular problem took so much of my time that other matters of municipal administration had to be deferred." (See news item in Public Management, September, 1952, p. 207).

Biery commented that some of the decisions reached in the garbage and rubbish disposal problem would have been more sound if more study had been given and if more time had been available to investigate the situation thoroughly.

As City Manager Custer got off the train to begin work in Kenosha on October 15, 1952, he was greeted by several members of the city council with the statement that the city employees had authorized their union representatives to call a general strike unless certain conditions were met by the city council at a meeting scheduled



for the evening of October 16. The issue was a demand for salary increases for city employees which was complicated by two factors: (1) the city council during the managerless period preceding Custer's arrival had granted all fire and police employees a substantial across-the-board salary increase; (2) classification and pay plans had been developed with the aid of the Wisconsin state bureau of personnel but had not yet been delivered. The manager had to go into conferences with the union representatives, the city attorney, and other city officials immediately, but he finally obtained a three-week postponement of the strike. During this time he reviewed the classification and pay plans, which were subsequently delivered, and prepared his recommendations for city council adoption.

All of the issues were eventually settled without a strike, but it resulted in a substantial increase in wages and salaries for city employees and deprived the manager of his opportunity during the early weeks on the job to become acquainted with the community. Custer commented that the crisis with the strike situation did bring two advantages:

"First, the time and situation were ripe for some positive and decisive action and, by taking such action, I was able to gain the confidence of the council, the employees, and the public in a quick and fairly dramatic manner.

"Secondly, the nature of the situation and the types of investigation and contacts forced upon me provided an excellent basis on which I could appraise many of the people with whom I was to deal later, particularly department heads and employee union leaders."

Custer pointed out emphatically, however, that there were two serious disadvantages in being forced to act so soon upon a critical problem. The first was that he lost his best opportunity to appraise the community and set forth long-range goals and problems for the city government. At a later time, when he was able to make such an appraisal, it was a much harder job to persuade the city council to take the long-range view on basic policy matters. Second, he did not have a chance to become sufficiently familiar with the city's physical plant, the bulk of the employees, and the leaders of the various publics in the city. Custer stated that he is only now catching up on this particular phase of his job.

### Summary

By implication at least, this report shows how the job of the city manager has broadened to include community leadership. In this role the city manager is responsible for giving the council all possible assistance in studying, reviewing, and finally determining city government policies. He cannot be concerned only with techniques and procedures, but also must be a positive vital force in planning the broad objectives for improving community life. In fulfilling this vital role in city government, the city manager from the very start must set a level and tone of leadership that will enable the city council, city employees, and the public each to contribute most effectively towards the goal of a better city. During this time, however, the manager must give attention also to the management tools of research, finance, personnel, planning, and city ordinances.

During this time, however, the manager must set a pace that does not depart too abruptly from past practices in the city. He should give attention also to the management tools of research, finance, personnel, planning, and city ordinances.

This report has no conclusions as such, but it can be summarized in part by listing some do's and don't's for the new city manager. These are based on the replies of City Managers Cushing and Custer, and on remarks made by City Manager



C. A. Harrell, Cincinnati, Ohio, at the ICMA Annual Conference in Los Angeles in 1953.

DON'T:

Don't get to know city council members too well personally because some members would be quite willing to take a new manager under their wing for obvious reasons. The public must not get the impression that any group controls the manager or is controlled by the manager.

Don't associate with department heads or staff personnel any more than is necessary for the over-all management job.

Don't become identified, even socially, with any particular group or public.

Don't be pressured by radios or newspapers into announcing a plan of action until the situation has been studied.

Don't make unfavorable comments about the preceding administration.

Don't overwork the references as to how certain things were done in the former city served.

Don't bring in outside personnel until the local labor market has been exhausted and that fact has been exploited in the local newspapers.

Don't take the spotlight.

Don't attempt to correct everything that is wrong during the first six months on the job.

DO:

Be in good health.

Become personally liked.

Listen to people.

Act decisively on immediate problems.

State your philosophy of government to city employees.

Learn who in the community can be trusted for sound information and advice.

Study the charter, budget, organization, and physical plant.

Get acquainted with newspaper editors, executives, bankers, labor leaders, and others, and also with the man in the street.

Meet with all boards and commissions whether appointed by the city council, mayor, or manager.

Learn as much as possible about the lawless or underworld element in the city.

Accept as far as possible every invitation for a public appearance.



Learn as much as possible about the background and attitudes of each member of the city council.

Study carefully the physical, financial, planning, personnel, and legal tools with which the manager has to work.

Gauge the level and character of services desired by the city council and the community.

Begin to build a program for a better city.

NOTE: MIS expresses its appreciation to the city managers named herein, who submitted information for this report, and to George E. Bean, president of ICMA who reviewed a tentative draft and made helpful suggestions. Mr. Bean is city manager of Peoria, Illinois and former manager at Escanaba, Pontiac and Grand Rapids, Michigan.